

VZCZCXRO4279  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #0767/01 0621022  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 031022Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9983  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000767

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: BAHAI REPORT SUPPORT ON IDENTITY CARDS, PUSH-BACK  
ON ENDOWMENT REGISTRATION

REF: 06 BAGHDAD 02519

Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT GILCHRIST, FOR REASONS  
1.4 (B, D).

[11.](#) (C) Summary: President of the Baha'i National Spiritual Advisory Group in Iraq, Abdul Razaq Abaychi, updated PolOffs on February 25 on the status of a Saddam-era regulation that leaves the Baha'i without identification to register in schools, obtain passports, or even get married legally. Abaychi said he hoped to build on support within the Ministry of Interior (MoI) to persuade Minister of Interior Jawad Bolani to cancel the rule. Abaychi also expressed continued frustration that the Baha'i remained unable to register with the Non-Muslim Endowment, which would allow them to receive state funding and be legally recognized. In a separate meeting, PolOffs encouraged the chair of the Non-Muslim Endowment to consider including the Baha'i under the organization's umbrella, although he expressed continued hesitation. While Iraq's Baha'i have made some small steps towards official recognition, they remain among Iraq's most discriminated against religious group. End Summary.

-----  
BAHA'I PUSH FOR IDENTITY CARDS  
-----

[12.](#) (C) On February 25, Baha'i Spiritual Advisory Group President Abaychi told PolOffs that MoI's Director of Nationality and Travel al-Yassiri had submitted a letter to Minister of Interior Bolani advocating for canceling rule number 358, a rule which prevents Baha'i from registering for the national identity card or "jensiyya." Al-Yassiri indicated in conversations with both the Baha'i and the Embassy that he had carefully crafted his recommendation to give strong support to the Baha'i cause. One month later however, al-Yassiri admitted that Minister Bolani had not engaged on this issue.

[13.](#) (C) Abaychi acknowledged that the next step for the Baha'i spiritual group was to engage directly with Minister Bolani in a meeting that he said that the Minister of Justice had agreed to arrange. Abaychi, referencing some of the lobbying meetings that the group had undertaken, told PolOffs that both the Ministers of Human Rights and Justice had agreed to support the Baha'i in any way they could.

-----  
NON-MUSLIM CHAIR PUSHES BACK ON BAHAI REGISTRATION  
-----

[14.](#) (C) Abaychi expressed frustration, however, with the Chair of the Non-Muslim Endowment, Abdullah Hermiz, who refused in an earlier meeting to allow the Baha'i from being registered under the umbrella of his endowment. Abaychi said that Hermiz justified his non-support for Baha'i registration

based on rule number 358 and Law 105 of 1970, which prohibits the Baha,i faith. He asked PolOffs to engage Hermiz on supporting Baha,i registration.

15. (C) On February 26, PolOffs met with Hermiz to request that he consider registering the Baha'i in the Non-Muslim Endowment. Hermiz initially responded to PolOffs in the negative, saying Shia Endowment head Sheikh Saleh al-Haidari opposed the idea, since Baha'ism emerged through a split from Shia Islam. However, after acknowledging that there was no law specifying which religions could be a part of the Endowment, Hermiz agreed to take up this proposal only if he received approval from the Prime Minister's office.

-----  
BAHA'I PRIORITIZE OBTAINING IDENTITY CARDS  
-----

16. (C) Abaychi noted to PolOffs that the Baha'i prioritized canceling rule number 358 over repealing Law 105 generally prohibiting the Baha,i faith, because rule 358 caused immediate hardships such as being unable to obtain passports and jobs and marry legally. Abaychi also noted that rule 358 can be canceled with MoI support, whereas repealing Law 105 would involve obtaining Council of Representatives (CoR) support and is therefore, more complicated.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

17. (C) Comment: It has been over a year since post first met with the Baha,i and encouraged their lobbying efforts to

BAGHDAD 00000767 002 OF 002

obtain recognition. Thus far, however, their efforts have achieved only limited results. Nonetheless, there have been some changes in attitude within the GoI toward the Baha'i, albeit at the margins. For example, MoI Director of Nationality and Travel was initially unwilling to consider their request. Today, he has become one of their advocates. Membership in the Non-Muslim Endowment would be an additional step and could afford the Baha'i official recognition, as well as providing another vehicle by which they could lobby their cause. Their next big step will be their meeting with Minister Bolani, who has the ability to take the first step in overcoming long-standing discriminatory practices. End Comment.  
KHALILZAD